



EXHIBIT 10
DATE 2-21-13
HB 439

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21 February 2013

House Agriculture Committee
Capitol Station
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Support for HB 439

Dear Chairman Randall and Members of the House Agriculture Committee,

On behalf of Best Friends Animal Society, a national animal welfare organization in its thirtieth year, I am pleased to offer support for House Bill 439 as a positive and viable means of improving the regulation of Montana's commercial breeding industry.

Puppy mills are an enormous problem in this country. These facilities, which supply most U.S. pet stores and online retailers, are cruel and inhumane factories in which profit and maximum productivity take priority over the health and welfare of the animals.

Although the USDA regulates commercial breeding facilities that sell wholesale, their standards do not ensure a humane life for dogs; in fact, they do little more than require food and water. These types of kennels can legally have hundreds - often a thousand - dogs in one facility, and these dogs are often confined to very small cages for their entire lives, forced to breed continuously in order to produce as many puppies as possible. Best Friends has transported and found placement for thousands of survivors of puppy mills, and we have seen firsthand the physical and psychological damage endured by these dogs when breeders are able to operate with no oversight or state regulation.

Because the goal is to make a profit, puppy mill owners must cut corners in order to keep expenses low and profits high. For the unsuspecting consumer, this frequently results in the purchase of a puppy facing an array of immediate veterinary problems or harboring genetic diseases that surface down the line, well after the pet store's warranty or state lemon law is applicable. This creates a financial burden on the consumer and results in many of these dogs being surrendered to overcrowded, taxpayer-subsidized shelters. Thus, this is not only a humane issue, but also a consumer protection issue.

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Between two and four million puppies are bred in licensed and non-licensed facilities in the U.S. every year, while two to four million animals are killed in U.S. shelters every year -- at taxpayer expense. These are not defective, unadoptable pets, but a surplus caused by the fact that there are simply not enough homes for them. It makes little sense to continue manufacturing dogs when so many are being killed for lack of space. Public education has been effective, but until states take the initiative to regulate animals being produced in these commercial facilities, there can be no hope of preventing these unnecessary deaths.

Best Friends applauds the state of Montana for taking a compassionate, common sense initiative to addressing the puppy mill crisis in your community, and setting a positive example for the rest of the country to follow. We are proud to support you in your efforts, and hope you will let us know if there is anything we can do to help.

Thank you for your consideration of this important proposal.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Oreck

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